

To the Honorable Gary D. LeBeau, Jeffery J. Berger, Co-Chairmen

Commerce Committee

Ref: Proposed H.B No. 5687 Rep. CANDELARIA, 95th Dist. 'AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR HANDICAPPED ACCESS AT THE BREGAMOS COMMUNITY THEATER', to provide funds to the Bregamos Community Theater Group for construction of a ramp and handicapped accessible restroom at its facility.

Bregamos Community Theater is a not-for-profit community organization located at 315 Peck Street, New Haven, CT. Bregamos provides after-school workshops in theatre to New Haven's youth that include: writing, acting, set design, lighting and sound. Bregamos is run by an all-volunteer staff. The theatre group produces four shows per year, renting other public and private facilities to stage its productions. Since its inception in 2001 Bregamos has served hundreds of New Haven's youth, introducing them to the different vocations of the theater industry. It also provides a free week-long theatre workshop summer camp for children ages 8-12. Bregamos currently sustains itself through public and private contributions, by selling ads and ticket sales. Bregamos is committed to increasing its workshops and the use of the workshop space for theater and other community and cultural activities. The above change of use would require a certificate of occupancy, thus requiring the construction of a ramp and handicapped accessible restrooms at the facility, in keeping with federal, state and local requirements for handicapped accessibility. It is to better serve the community with our productions, workshops and outreach that we respectfully request that you consider the authorization of these bonds. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Highlights

- Bregamos was the only theatre chosen to represent the United States at the 2008 International Community Theatre Festival in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Bregamos was the Festival's headlining performance, performing before a sold out international audience.
- Bregamos was the first theatre group to produce "Kingdom" an award-winning hip-hop musical written by New Haven's Aaron Jafferis which won the Most Promising Musical Award at the New York Musical Theatre Festival 2007.
- In February 2008, Bregamos presented "A Taste of JFK, Malcolm X & Adam Clayton Powell Jr.: Remembering the 60's" at the Peabody Museum at Yale University to a standing-room only crowd.
- Bregamos founder Rafael Ramos received the prestigious 2007 Elm Ivy Award from Yale University which honors members of the Yale/New Haven community who perform outstanding work in the community while promoting stronger town/gown relations.
- Also in 2007 the Arts Council of Greater New Haven presented Ramos with its Movers and Shakers Award in recognition of his work in bringing Bregamos to the New Haven community.
- Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro honored Ramos and Bregamos with a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for outstanding and invaluable service to the community.
- Attorney General Richard Blumenthal also afforded Ramos and Bregamos an Official Citation in recognition of their dedicated service to the community and state.
- In 2006, New Haven's Board of Aldermen presented Bregamos Theater with an Aldermanic Citation for its outstanding work in the community
- Bregamos Theater was awarded its 501 (c)(3) status in June, 2006.



Rafael Ramos

Bregamos Community Theater Company

New Haven has been, from its original settling, a place where dreamers became doers and where people came from far distances to create and build community. Rafael Ramos embodies and extends that founding legacy. He is a transplanted visionary who has put down deep roots and made his creative dreams a reality that excites, challenges, enlivens, and unites us all.

Growing up the grandson of a building superintendent in the Bronx, it is not so surprising that Rafael has grown up to become the deputy director of housing code enforcement in the City of New Haven. His work in that capacity alone merits recognition, for he has been tireless in working to improve the safe and sanitary conditions for New Haveners across the city.

But today we celebrate the wonderful fact that in New Haven, a housing code inspector with a vision can also create theater companies that make a difference. His Bregamos Community Theater is dedicated to creating theater out of real life stories in our community. In a few short years it has become widely-recognized around town, creating not only cultural buzz but also informing civic debates about the roots and realities of violence and the hopes and aspirations of young people. In building his company, Rafael has reached out and included Yale University as a partner. Bregamos' most recent show, *Kingdom*, demonstrates his success in uniting the many facets of our town, with a creative team that included a graduate of Hillhouse High School, a student in the New Haven Job Corps, and a Yale College senior, among others.

The spirit and practice of collaboration is present in all Rafael does, including his service in reviving Junta for Progressive Action, where he helped bring Yale University faculty, staff, and students to support the magnificent revival of Junta as an effective community nonprofit. In recognition of the inspiration he shows by making dreams real and bringing community together, President Levin and Alderman Goldfield will now present Rafael Ramos with an Elm Award.

May 2, 2007